

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /060 W

-----059417 220404Z /20

R 211435Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7327

INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH

AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE WINDS UP LATTANZIO AFFAIR

REF: ROME 15239

1. PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE CABINET SHUFFLE INVOLVING THE EXCHANGE OF MINISTRIES BETWEEN LATTANZIO AND RUFFINI CONCLUDED ON SEPTEMBER 20 WITH THE DECISIVE REJECTION OF FOUR RESOLUTIONS CRITICAL OF LATTANZIO AND THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE CASE. A RESOLUTION CENSORING LATTANZIO SPONSORED BY THE TINY EXTREME-LEFT PARTY, THE DEOMOCRAT-PROLETARIANS, WAS VOTED DOWN WITH 32 IN FAVOR, 169 AGAINST, AND 215 ABSTAINING. AFTER SIMILAR MOTIONS PRESENTED BY THE NEO-FASCIST MSI-DN AND THE RADICAL PARTY WERE SIMILARLY DEFEATED, THE CHAMBER DISPOSED OF A SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT (PSDI) RESOLUTION CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT SHUFFLE WITH A VOTE OF 43 IN FAVOR,
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162 AGAINST, AND 208 ABSTAINING.

2. THE VOTES APPEAR TO HAVE FOLLOWED STRICT PARTY LINES WITH THE DC ALONE VOTING AGAINST ALL FOUR RESOLUTIONS. THE PCI AND PSI VOTED AGAINST THE MIS MOTION BUT ABSTAINED ON THE OTHERES. THE REPUBLICANS ABSTAINED ON THE PSDI AND DEMPRO RESOLUTIONS BUT VOTED AGAINST

THE OTHER TWO. THE LIBERALS ABSTAINED ON ALL FOUR, WHILE THE MSI AND PSDI VOTED IN FAVOR OF THEIR OWN AND ABSTAINED ON THE REST. COMMENT: THE RESOLUTIONS SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH MOTIONS OF NO-CONFIDENCE, WHICH AT ANY RATE WOULD HAVE REQUIRED THE SIGNATURES OF A TENTH OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER AND WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE DIRECTED AT THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT AND NOT AT A SINGLE MINISTER. NEITHER DO THE VOTES IMPLY ANY CHANGE IN THE ABSTENTION SUPPORT PROVIDED THE DC MINORITY GOVERNMENT BY THE PCI, PSI, PSDI, PRI AND PLI, ALTHOUGH THE PSDI'S CRITICAL POSTURE CONNOTES AN ATTITUDE OF GREATER POLITICAL RESERVE THAN HITHERTO EXPRESSED. IN EXPLAINING THE PSDI'S POSITION, PARTY SECRETARY ROMITA SAID THAT HIS PARTY WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM ACCORD, BUT THAT IT WOULD "MAINTAIN ITS DISTANCE" BY HENCEFORTH MAKING ITS JUDGEMENTS ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS. END COMMENT.

3. THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE WAS NEVER IN DOUBT. THE TENOR OF THE DEBATE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL, HOWEVER, INDICATIVE OF THE LACK OF A CLEAN VICTORY FOR ANY SIDE IN THE COMPROMISE SOLUTION THAT ANDREOTTI HAD ADOPTED. ANDREOTTI, HIMSELF, DEFENDED THE CABINET SHUFFLE AS "NATURAL" AND A "COMPROMISE IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD", SINCE IT RESPECTED PARLIAMENT'S DESIRE TO REMOVE LATTANZIO FROM THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO WITHOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNJUSTLY "OSTRACIZING" LATTANZIO. HE ALSO JUSTIFIED LATTANZIO'S REMOVAL ON THE "OBJECTIVE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY" OF KEEPING THE ARMED FORCES FREE FROM ANY POLEMIC. MOST OF THE OTHER SPEAKERS, HOWEVER, INCLUDING THE DC'S PICCOLI, INDICATED UNHAPPINESS OVER THE "COMPROMISE".

PICCOLI EXPRESSED THE "BITTERNESS" OF HIS PARTY AND THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OVER THE "PERSONALIZED" ATTACK ON LATTANZIO, THEREBY CREATING THE KIND OF PROBLEM THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TO RESOLVE "INDEPENDENTLY". WHILE ALSO CRITICAL OF THE BITTERSWEET RESULTS OF THE COMPROMISE, PCI GROUP LEADER NATTA NONETHELESS UNDERSCORED THE PCI'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM ACCORD. GARDNER

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